(Long-term), an Inter-Ministerial Committee, the Government has approved grant of "tapering linkage" to certain Power Sector units and Sponge Iron Units, which were allotted coal blocks but mining of which was yet to commence. The coal supplies will be made for a maximum period of three years or till the units develop their coal blocks to meet their coal requirements, whichever is earlier.

(b) and (c) On 4th December, 2007, Ministry of Coal has issued guidelines relating to issue of Letter of Assurance (LoA)/allocation of coal on "Tapering Basis" to various consumers. The salient features of these guidelines are given below:—

(i) Procedures for granting tapering linkage would be similar to the procedure being followed for grant of normal linkage. The applicant has to submit an application, in triplicate, alongwith prescribed processing fees.

(ii) Tapering linkages would be considered by the Standing Linkage Committee (Long Term) and approved by the competent authority.

(iii) Year-wise allocation of coal on tapering linkage basis would be based on the Letter of Allocation of the blocks and the approved mining plan.

(iv) Normally, the validity period for tapering linkages would not be extended. This means that after the period of the tapering linkage is over, it will be deemed to have been terminated. However, in some rare cases, if there are strong justifiable reasons for extension of tapering linkage, the allocattee company should move a fresh application for a fresh tapering linkage to the Standing Linkage Committee (Long Term).

(d) Coal Controller has been entrusted with the exercise of working out the year-wise requirement of tapering linkage based on the difference between year-wise requirement and the year-wise production of coal as per the approved mine plan and subject to such quantitative or other restrictions as may be prescribed in this regard.

Joint venture firms in coal exploration

3242. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Steel Authority of India Limited and Tata Steels have set up a joint venture to mine coal blocks for securing assured coking coal supply to meet their increasing production needs;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether his Ministry has given permission to such joint venture firms to explore coal; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the extent to which it would have an effect on import of coal from other countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) and Tata Steels have signed a Joint Venture Agreement for mining of coal on 3rd January, 2008.

(c) As per power delegated to Navratna PSUs, permission from the Government is not required in this case.

(d) In view of the expansion plans of SAIL, the requirement of imported coal from other countries may not come down inspite of the joint venture.

Coal shortage situation

3243. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether a serious coal shortage situation is brewing at a number of major thermal power stations across the country, with the coal stock position in 20 stations being termed as "critical";

(b) if so, whether according to his Ministry the shortages are on account of a lower coal production by Coal India Limited between April and September, 2007;

(c) if so, the latest position; and

(d) the steps being considered to meet the coal shortage in these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): (a) to (c) There is no acute shortage of coal for power generation into stations having coal stock of less than 7 days consumption are considered critical. Central Electricity Authority, which monitors the coal stock position of 77 thermal power stations located all over the country reports the details of number of critical plants on daily basis and number/ specific plant keeps changing due to change in coal stock position. As on 20.4.2008, there are 22 number of critical thermal power stations on account of loading/unloading and movement constrants, short-term production constraints in the linked source etc. Though Coal India Limited (CIL)'s production during April-September, 2007 was less as compared to the larget, CIL's dispatches to power utilities were more than the Annual Action Plan target by liquidating pithead coal stock. The coal dispatches to power utilities during April-September, 2007 was 130.96 million tonnes as against target of 128.90 million tonnes, registering a growth of about 5.5% over corresponding period of previous year.

(d) The Standing Linkage Committee (Short-term), an inter-ministerial Committee allocates coal, on quarterly basis, from coal producing companies to various power utilities. A Sub-group under the Chairmanship of Additional Secretary, Ministry of Coal comprising the representatives of Ministry of Power, Railways and Central Electricity Authority monitors supply of coal to various power stations. Corrective measures are taken by the sub-group from time to time to ensure availability of sufficient supply of coal to various power utilities and to prevent any loss of generation of power due to non availability of coal.

Safety parameters in coal mines

3244. SHRI B.J. PANDA:
MS. MABEL REBELLO:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Centre proposes to monitor safety parameters in coal mines;

(b) if so, the details thereof;